



# What are your professors up to this summer?

In a historic year for UTD’s Fulbright participation, professors research all over the world

MARIA SHAIKH  
Managing Editor

Three UTD faculty members are researching abroad as Fulbright U.S. Scholars during the 2023-2024 academic year — the most sent abroad by the university since 1978 — pioneering new ideas and bringing back one-of-a-kind experiences for students come fall 2024.

Assistant Professor of History Rosemary Admiral, visual arts lecturer Colette Copeland and Professor of Materials Science Robert Wallace visited Morocco, India and Ireland, respectively,

pursuing yearlong projects in partnership with local host institutions through the Fulbright Scholar Program. Other professors like Assistant Professor of Art History Ali Alibhai spent their summers abroad expanding on their previous Fulbright work. Fulbright is a nationwide grant program that sends roughly 800 American professors abroad and welcomes roughly 900 visiting professors annually, with fluctuation between years; UTD sees a handful of both U.S. and visiting scholars each year. For Admiral, her Fulbright grant let her engage intimately with

an under-studied part of North African history: women’s education and its relation to law.

“The earlier research I did is mostly about ordinary women, women who are not educated, women who did not have education in the law, who just kind of encountered the law when they needed to,” Admiral said. “Originally, I was interested mostly in how women engaged with Islamic law as scholars of Islamic law ... [but] there’s so many other ways women engaged with learning at the time, I broadened my scope and then during this Fulbright year, it evolved in

ways I wasn’t expecting.”

The Fulbright grant put Admiral in collaboration with the Moroccan government’s Muhammadiyah League of Scholars, which she said was critical for gaining research clearance and accessing their network of scholars and alumni. But Admiral said much of her research didn’t involve poring over books, but instead building relationships.

SEE **ABROAD**, PAGE 3



ALI ALIBHAI | COURTESY





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# Construction Blotter

## JSOM

From summer 2024 through summer 2026, Lot Q, Lot M North and the land extending from those lots east to Loop Road will be closed off and become a construction site. A section of Loop Road closest to the construction site will be closed throughout the project. A section of Drive A just north of the construction site will be closed throughout the project.

## Athenaeum

From summer 2024 through summer 2026, Lot Q, Lot M North, and the land extending from those lots east to Loop Road will be closed off and become a construction site. Additionally, the sidewalk to the east side of University Drive will be closed near the Athenaeum complex construction site during the project's next phase: building the performance hall.

## Lot M South

A new parking lot will be constructed on the southeast side of Armstrong Drive, on the other side of the road from Lot M South. As the project begins, the parallel parking spots along Armstrong Drive will no longer be available. Lot M South will be used for construction activities and will be unavailable for public use.

## Bryce Jordan Road and Drive G

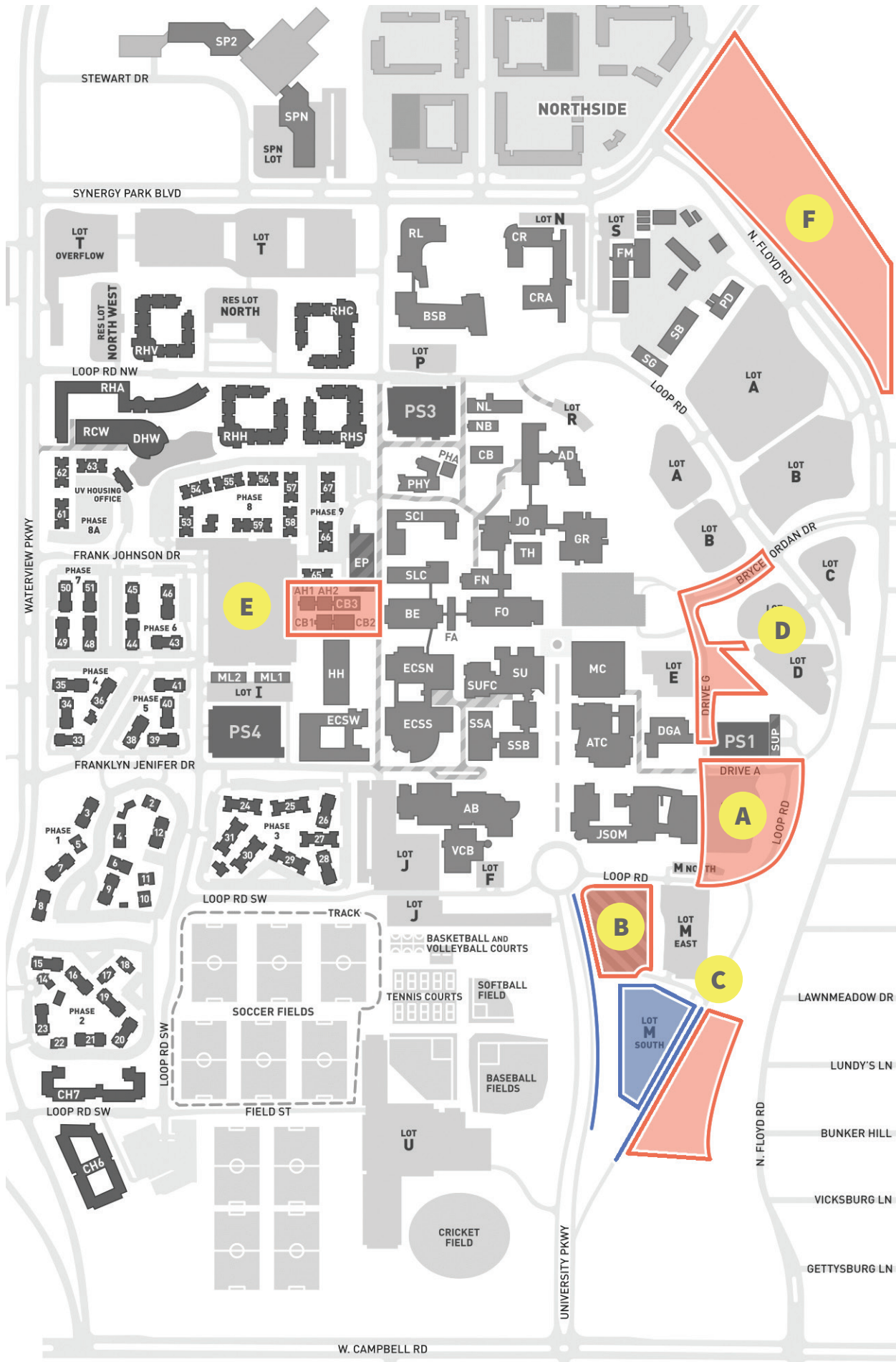
Several closures are scheduled to happen around the intersection of Bryce Jordan Road and Drive G until Aug. 16.

## Classroom Buildings

The area around Classroom Buildings 1 through 3, Arts and Humanities 1 and 2 and part of Lot H will be closed off for demolition.

## Construction Staging

A section of land south and east of the intersection of Synergy Park Boulevard and North Floyd Road will be used as a staging area for the Student Success Center construction project throughout the summer.



GRAPHIC BY ANIKA SULTANA | GRAPHICS EDITOR  
MAP COURTESY OF UTD

## From The Mercury Archives: September 5, 2000

## Campus Activism Issues 2000 — a student's perspective

By Ramona Ravin  
Mercury Contributor

In last week's edition of *The Mercury*, there was a brief report on the August 23 visit to campus of Mexican President-elect Vicente Fox and Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush. It was a small story — less than 3 x 5 — and could easily have been missed. And unless you were actually on campus that day, the event might well have escaped your notice. For those of us who were there, however, it was hard not to pay attention, and even harder not to be angry. That anger grew to outrage the following Monday, when the faculty/staff e-mail list received a letter from UTD President Franklyn Jenifer, bursting with pride at what a "historic day" the Fox/Bush visit had been for our campus. Jenifer minimized the closing of parking lots, the last minute moving and cancellation of classes, the displacement of staff from offices and the unsightly obstruction of our streets by television crews and police blockades as "inconveniences."

The Fox/Bush visit had "nothing to do with the University or its students, faculty, staff or policies," as reported by *The Mercury*. Then why were they there? How can a publicly funded institution like UTD be hijacked for the day by a foreign dignitary, a partisan politician, and four or five dozen corporate CEOs, with no input or involvement from the people who work and study here? What were they

doing, and why did it have to be done behind closed doors? As nominal head of all public universities in the state of Texas, it seems that governor Bush can commandeer any building he pleases and do as he likes, although faculty, students and even administrators decidedly cannot. Why was there no discussion of this imbalance? This kind of unfettered power is dangerous to the public good. More importantly, who paid for this three-ring circus? The frippery needed for an official state visit — flags, bunting, lunch for reporters — doesn't come free. While sources indicate that the event was funded by the governor's office, UTD surely bore some of the financial burden in terms of additional man-hours wasted in preparing and implementing the plan for this largely clandestine affair. And it took place during the first week of classes when, as we know, faculty and staff have so little to do. What about those canceled classes? They've already been paid for. Even if the event was expenditure-neutral, which seems unlikely, this just pushes the question back a step without addressing the question of access and accountability. Who decided where and when to meet, who would be invited and who would be barred? If such a meeting is so "historic," why wasn't the campus community given an opportunity to participate? If there are valid reasons why we could not take part in any way, why weren't we told what they were? In fact, the visit was not even announced on campus and many

people still aren't aware that it took place. This is our campus.

In his note of thanks, Jenifer singled out, among others, the campus police for his special gratitude. Jenifer believes that the UTD police were among those who "helped make this event a success" by doing "an outstanding job of meeting the needs of our guests." If UTD's "guests" had a pressing need to shroud their activities in secrecy, use taxpayer and student funded spaces for their own political and economic gain, and trample the constitutional rights of students and the public, then an outstanding job was indeed done. (Aren't people who invite themselves over, help themselves to your stuff and leave a mess behind usually called "freeloaders," not "guests"?)

By mid-afternoon, protesters had gathered in front of Hoblitzelle Hall, some of them returning there after having been chased off earlier to the designated "free speech" area on the opposite side of campus. Leaving aside the absurdity of permitting demonstrations only in approved areas and counting that as "free," the protest itself was no large mob of unruly hooligans hell bent on destruction. While few in number, the protesters were calm, peaceful and articulate about the issues they defended and keen to educate others. They represented a cross-section of activist concerns, ranging from Mexican-American laborers protesting working conditions, to the SEED Coalition determined to clean up the Big Bend

— the country's most polluted national park — to students opposed to NAFTA and the uncontrollable forces of corporate globalization. Demonstrators engaged patiently with both passersby and the police, who grew visibly more agitated as the protest swelled in number to about fifteen — eek! One of these, a UTD student armed only with colorful placards and a steadfast attitude, was ordered by campus police and officious looking guys in black suits to move from the lawn in front of Hoblitzelle. When she graciously declined to do so, she was handcuffed and led away to jail faster than you can say "police state of Texas." It was later learned that she was charged with criminal trespass — for standing on the lawn, on a campus where she pays to go to school — just because there were some rich and influential people wheeling and dealing behind closed, guarded doors at no time exposed to any threat of any kind, is an affront to the dignity of students and the security of the U.S. Constitution. That such offenses occurred in collusion with the university administration and state leadership is perhaps the most disturbing feature of UTD's "historic" day. UTD's finest have demonstrated their willingness to crack down swiftly and excessively on anyone who dares to exercise the freedom to which every citizen is entitled. Shall we be cowed into submission or issue a campus-wide call to action? If we do decide to act, will the state buy us a free lunch?



New BBS dean appointed

Adam Woods will begin his new role in fall 2024



ADAM WOODS | COURTESY

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ  
Editor-in-Chief

UTD selected Adam Woods as the next dean for the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. Woods’ term as dean begins Aug. 15, 2024.

Since fall 2023, BBS has operated without a dean, with Margaret Owen acting and overseeing BBS as an interim dean. She will return to her position as faculty beginning

SEE **DEAN**, PAGE 5

Bruce August Jr. commemorated: ‘a giant among men’

Co-workers and family attended the ceremony unveiling a new reflection space in honor of August

KAVYA RACHEETI  
Mercury Staff

The weather on June 28 is bright and sunny, a perfect fit to commemorate former UTD alumnus and director of the Multicultural Center Bruce August Jr. through a new reflection space near the Sciences building.

This wide-reaching community collaboration is a testament to how beloved August was to UTD administration and faculty. Multiple administrative offices took part in creating not just the reflection space, but also a new fund and award named after August possible, such as The Office of Campus Resources and Support, Staff Council, Facilities and Economic Development, the Black Faculty Staff Alliance, Development and Alumni Relations and the President’s Office.

“Bruce was a touchstone for what UTD staff should aspire to be like,” UTD Vice President and Chief of Staff Rafael Martin said. “He was resourceful and kind.”

August, the late director of the former Multicultural Center, was a cornerstone in promoting inclusivity on campus as a founding member of the Black Faculty Staff Alliance. The reflection space currently resides where students and staff would celebrate Juneteenth before the holiday’s national recognition, which August never failed to help organize. August’s work and



ANIKHA SULTANA | MERCURY STAFF

The newly-built reflection space features a bench and a plaque commemorating August's life, work at UTD and impact.

disposition makes it apparent he wanted one thing for everyone on campus: the feeling of being welcomed and appreciated.

Heather Ulman, a representative for Staff Council, called August the “mastermind” of last year’s staff appreciation event modeled after a casino night. Staff members in the audience reminisced aloud to one another at the mention of that staff appreciation day, remembering how much fun it was.

August was also very vocal in his appreciation for his colleagues. Yvette Pearson and Tineil Lewis-Moore, respectively the former ODEI vice president and the director of student development, who both worked with

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ABROAD  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“I can’t just expect to read a catalog or go to an archive and say ‘I want to see this manuscript or this document’ — that will get you only so far,” Admiral said. “Especially with the kind of research I’m doing, which is kind of like a needle in a haystack. There are no books about women, I’m looking for sentences about women ... So much of my work is talking to people, talking to scholars, people who are interested in this topic and know about it. Librarians, archivists who are like ‘Oh, did you know we have this manuscript that has a poem by a woman?’ ... You really need to make personal connections and academic connections and professional connections, and that’s how you’ll find the sources that you need.”

When researching for her first, upcoming book — a multi-year process including her Fulbright trip — Admiral said she ended up exploring far beyond her initial focus on female scholars in the Marinid dynasty, which encompassed present-day Morocco. Collecting information on palace women and their education became a major focus in Admiral’s work.

“Women weren’t studying at the institutions [the Marinid government] founded, but there was kind of a trickledown effect,” Admiral said. “Women couldn’t maybe go to the madrasa, an official institution of learning, but they could easily go to these other informal venues of learning, which were just as important ... Also, within the palace, there were women connected to the rulers or the royal family that were recognized for their learning and also women connected to the palace through, usually, their fathers ... they were in the palace at the same time as this scholar and they received a certificate to transmit knowledge from the scholar.”

Many Fulbright scholars continue their research abroad through different avenues. Admiral’s time in Morocco, which concluded in late July, was her second Fulbright experience after her dissertation research in 2012, and she has visited the country without a Fulbright grant as well. Alibhai, who visited Spain in 2008 on a Fulbright grant, returned this summer to continue researching for his upcoming book that explores medieval Islamic soundscapes.

“As cities change from being Christian to Muslim, you see that there is a regulation,” Alibhai said. “Whoever is in charge, their culture’s prayer should be the predominant sound versus the conquered. So, the naqus [wooden clappers used by churches to call Christians for prayer] and everything, it’s not outlawed, but you don’t want it in the streets. So when early Islamic civilization is encountering these other civilizations, it’s important to control the soundscape.”

Alibhai’s Fulbright research focused on church bells, an aural symbol of Christianity, which were silenced by removal and repurposed into intricate lamps used to decorate mosques, like the Great Mosque of Cordoba, by Muslim rulers seeking legitimacy or pushing back against Christian armies.

“For me, it was like converting holy sound that had the same properties but into holy light, right?” Alibhai said, referencing Islam’s use of light as a metaphor for guidance and holiness. “And you wouldn’t even know that [the lamps] had bells in them if you didn’t look closely and understand the

history behind it ... a lot of people in Fez didn’t know that they had bells in them.”

For Alibhai, studying bell lamps during his Fulbright year and following it up with other research trips exploring artistic and architectural features like Mudejar art — a blending of Gothic, Romanesque and Islamic styles in medieval Spain, created by Muslim artisans or Christians trained in the Islamic style — helped understand the mentalities of those living in its multicultural, multi-religious society.

“What’s come out of this friction [between Muslim, Christian and Jewish political groups] are these bell lamps that I don’t see as harmonious, happy, kumbaya people living together,” Alibhai said. “It’s more like they understood exactly what the bell represented to them and converted it into something that was equally holy to them ... Today when we look at it, we’re like, oh yeah, this is so amazing and spectacular because these three cultures are [harmonious], but they never thought about it that way. This is just how everything blended together.”

Beyond pioneering new research efforts, Fulbright and other research-abroad programs create several opportunities for the students of traveling professors. Some professors, like Alibhai, bring graduate and undergraduate students along on trips abroad — which he said is partially funded by UTD. Others eventually lead dedicated study-abroad courses; Admiral has led one for the past two years, where students receive half a semester of historical and cultural background before a two-week trip. More immediately accessible to students are the unique materials professors bring back to the classroom. For instance, Admiral said her book includes a case study she translated and now uses to instruct her students on historical methods and critical thinking.

“[It is] a very long case about a woman from the 14th century in Morocco who had kind of a scandalous situation that turned into a major legal dispute,” Admiral said. “I’ve brought that translation into my students and had them work through it with me and approach it, because part of learning about history is learning how to read a primary source and what it means and how do you interpret it ... And students have different perspectives and bring up things that I hadn’t even considered, so I really love being able to bring in my work to the classroom.”

Fulbright scholarships are available to students as well as professors. Undergraduates and graduate students can apply to teach English abroad, conduct dissertation research or pursue other academic projects. Admiral said she believes the program is fantastic for all kinds of students — not just career academics, but anything from medical students to those going into the broad range of industry.

“After I came back [from my dissertation research], I was still a Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois, I would read applications of undergraduates who wanted to do research projects and Morocco and give them feedback, and then that would strengthen their applications and then we had a lot of students get Fulbright,” Admiral said. “We should be sending more students abroad.”

Applications for the Fulbright program’s various grants during the 2025-2026 school year close Oct. 6. Admiral and Alibhai’s books are slated to release 2025, and Alibhai is slated to present his research at SMU’s Meadows Museum Oct. 25.



PHOTOS BY ALI ALIBHAI & ROSEMARY ADMIRAL | COURTESY



# The Mercury faces over \$8,500 fee

Questions surrounding the legal proceedings of arrestees, administrators' intent with summoning police and more remain paywalled by UTD

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ  
Editor-in-Chief

At 4:30 a.m. May 1, student organizers created the "Gaza Liberation Plaza" encampment to protest UTD's policy toward Palestine. Less than twelve hours later, UTDPD, Texas DPS officers and other local departments raided the encampment — 21 students, faculty, alumni and community members were arrested. *The Mercury* has extensively investigated the aftermath of these arrests, covering and investigating the community response and administration's move to press charges on those arrested.

*The Mercury* provided live breaking news coverage of the "Gaza Liberation Plaza" throughout the day. Reporters and photographers visited the plaza throughout the day to document the events that occurred before the raid such as study sessions, mini-lectures and prayers.

Protesters began reporting the presence of state troopers on campus around 2:45 p.m., and by 4 p.m. over 60 law enforcement officers from UTDPD, Richardson PD, Allen PD, Collin County Sheriff's Department and the Texas DPS had amassed outside of the Student Services Auxiliary and the Student Services Building. *Mercury* reporters and photographers were present prior to and during the raid. Moving eastward toward the Chess Plaza area, occupied by the encampment, officers first arrested faculty and students outside of Chess Plaza before tearing down the western wall of the encampment and entering to arrest more students and community members who had locked arms in the center of the plaza. As armored vehicles with grenade launchers moved into the area, students protesting the destruction of the encampment moved to the Plinth and continued their protest around 6 p.m. *The Mercury* updated its breaking news coverage before sending staff to Collin County Jail, where demonstrations began around 7 p.m.

"It was a beautiful space," a UTD Stu-

dents for Justice in Palestine officer said about the encampment. "It was a palace where you had children and the elderly. You had art, study sessions, and a library was even established. Prior to the arrests, everyone was engaged in this act of community you rarely find at UTD, a university where administrators care more about profit and certain corporations than the needs of their own students."

Over 100 protesters spent the night outside of Collin County Jail calling for the release of the arrested students, faculty, alumni and community members. An oral standing order from Collin County Magistrate Lisa Bronchetti prevented the detainees from being released May 1. *The Mercury* published its third breaking news story at 2 a.m. May 2 recapping the county jail protest. The 21 detainees would be released throughout May 2, and on May 3 *The Mercury* published a fourth breaking news article regarding their release.

*The Mercury* reached out to the Office of the President for comment May 2 and sent multiple follow-up messages for the next month, receiving no reply. *The Mercury* routinely contacted other administrators such as Martin, Fitch and Dean of Students Amanda Smith, and similarly received no answers or responses before publication of the May 20 special issue. Vice President of Student Affairs Gene Fitch and Vice President and Chief of Staff Rafael Martín scheduled a meeting with *The Mercury* for May 23 in the aftermath of the May 20 publication, however, both Fitch and Martín then

"The courts generally were more receptive to ruling in favor of [public records] requesters until these rights peaked sometime in the 1990s and has since trended down."

— Paul Watler

canceled the meeting without rescheduling. Without administration willing to provide comment on questions like who summoned the police and the future of



ANIKA SULTANA | MERCURY STAFF

**A UTD student documents Texas state troopers assisting local law enforcement in dismantling the "Gaza Liberation Plaza." The police raid on the peaceful encampment began at 4:00 p.m. Twenty-one individuals were arrested on May 1.**

arrested students and faculty, *The Mercury* thus continued to rely on sourcing statements written in President Richard Benson's *Dallas Morning News* op-ed or on statements provided within the May 10 emergency meeting of the Academic Senate, wherein faculty members passed a resolution demanding UTD drop the charges against the arrested staff and students.

*The Mercury* consulted legal experts and professional journalists while attempting to contact campus administrators for crucial information regarding the May 1 protest. After receiving no new information from campus administrators, *The Mercury* filed a Public Records request with UTD. As of publication of this article, the request is still pending. The first cost estimate sent by UTD would require that *The Mercury* pay an estimated \$8,548.67 to receive a copy of the records relevant to *The Mercury*'s request. The Texas Public Information Act or PIA, first passed in 1973, is the process *The Mercury* is using to request information like emails, texts and phone

records from public individuals like Benson, Martín and Smith. Paul Watler, a board member of the Freedom of Information Foundation Texas, partner at Jackson Walker and co-author of the Reporters Committee's Texas Open Government Guide, said that public institutions have become more hostile to records requests like *The Mercury*'s over time.

"I think there has been some regression in the law since the 1990s as Texas courts have, in broad terms, generally not expanded or reinforced the rights of requesters," Watler said. "When the Public Information Act was first passed in 1973, the courts generally were more receptive to ruling in favor of requesters until these rights peaked sometime in the 1990s and have since trended down."

Watler said that in recent years, journalists and other requesters have faced more opposition within the legal system when requesting information about extreme events like mass shootings. Watler said that since the initial passage of the PIA, exemptions have continued to be added toward what information must be released, allowing groups such as law enforcement agencies and other government

bodies to have greater control over what information they must release, if anything at all.

The UTD Office of Legal Affairs, in its response to *The Mercury*'s public information request, provided a time estimate

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SURJADITYA SARKAR | MERCURY STAFF

**Texas state troopers prepare to enter the "Gaza Liberation Plaza."**

## Summer gaming recap

MAR OLOGBAN  
Mercury Staff

LEGO Horizon Adventures was announced during the Summer Fest, a spin-off of the Horizon Zero Dawn series, with release coming this winter.

Assassin's Creed Shadows is the latest entry to the Assassin's Creed series, which will follow Yasuke, the only Black samurai in Japan, to be released Nov. 15, 2024.

Sonic X Shadow Generations is a sequel to Sonic Generations, originally released in 2011. The latest entry will have Shadow join

Sonic and Classic Sonic, coming Oct. 25.

Mario and Luigi Brotherhood will be the newest Mario and Luigi game to join the series, the previous game Mario and Luigi: Paper Jam came out for the Nintendo 3DS. Mario and Luigi Brotherhood will be released Nov. 7.

The latest DLC for Street Fighter 6 has been announced, which will include M. Bison, an original Street Fighter character, and multiple characters from The King of Fighters series, including Terry Bogard, Elena and Mai Shiranui. The characters will be released starting in summer 2024.



MADABUCHI OKORO | MERCURY STAFF

## Campus construction update: projects ongoing

KAVYA RACHEETI  
Opinion Editor

Several roads and pedestrian paths will be closed from the beginning of June 24 to Aug. 16 because of new developments in construction, altering the usual trajectory of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Major construction projects have been underway since fall 2023 such as the Performance Hall, SOM Phase III and the new Student Success Center, which are expected to finish by early-to-mid fall 2026. The Athenaeum, which began construction in 2022, is expected to be finished toward the end of the summer. The construction of the Performance Hall, including a parking lot, will result in a closed sidewalk alongside University Drive toward the end of next semester and road closures on Armstrong, including the parallel parking spaces reserved for those with green parking passes. The main disturbance for parking is the complete shutdown of Lot Q, and partially Lot M, which will be unavailable for use in late summer, alongside temporary closures of lanes on Loop Road as well as the road itself for transportation of utilities. There will also be closures on Drive G and Bryce Jordan throughout the summer because of the construction of the Student Success Center.

The pedestrian crosswalk alongside Armstrong will remain open. The Arts and Humanities Buildings 1-2 and Classroom Buildings 1-3 will be fenced off to be demolished this summer. The most severe obstruction to pedestrian traffic during the summer will be the closure of the perimeter surrounding the lake near the Davidson-Gundy Alumni Center, which will reopen by Aug. 16. *The Mercury* will publish further updates on construction as the year continues.



**An excavator digs in its natural habitat, the ruins of the Green Center.**



PHOTOS BY SURJADITYA SARKAR | MERCURY STAFF





FATIMAH AZEEM  
Mercury Staff

UTD will begin competing in the NCAA Division II Lone Star Conference this fall semester after 26 years in the Division III American Southwest Conference. As a Division II school, UTD is now eligible to offer athletic scholarships.

The NCAA announced July 11 that UTD’s petition to move into Division II was approved on an “expedited provisional membership” which would take only two years to complete instead of the typical three-year membership process.

Since its creation in 1998, the UTD Comet Sports program has exclusively participated within the Division III ASC conference.

Vice President of Student Affairs Gene Fitch said that \$3 million will be added to the annual budget of the UTD Athletics department so as to cover the costs of hiring new staff and coaches to support the various sports Comets participate in while also providing for the creation of a select few sports scholarships that are regulated by the NCAA and awarded by UTD’s coaches.

“We’re not touching academic money,” Fitch said. “None of that is being impacted, and I don’t want our students to think that something’s being taken away from them.”

UTD will be competing as an independent during the fall 2024-spring 2025 academic year during its first year with provisional membership in the Lone Star Conference.



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY YIYI DING | MERCURY STAFF

PHOTOS BY NAHUM PILLI | MERCURY STAFF

DEAN  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

fall 2024. Before coming to UTD, Woods worked as the Associate Dean of Research in the College of Public Health and Health Professions at the University of Florida. Woods has collaborated on and published over 160 peer reviewed papers.

“When I became aware of the position search for BBS, I realized that this one school had everything I was passionate about: neuroscience, psychology and health science, in one unique combination,” Woods said.

In 2010, Woods received his Ph.D. in cognitive neuroscience from George Washington University in Washington D.C. Woods said he has spent most of his career working within health sciences by organizing clinical trials, researching dementia and cognitive decline and emphasizing the research approach of “bench to bedside” — a scientific approach in which the research developed within a laboratory is incorporated into clinical care. Woods said UTD’s unique BBS discipline called to him because of his years working within the specific subfield that BBS is built around.

“The centers and faculty at BBS have consistently found exciting ways to apply and understand the complex mechanisms of the brain and its behaviors,” Woods said. “This research has allowed for insight into pain, memory loss, dementia and so many other crucial areas of inquiry.”

Woods said that in his eleven years of teaching as a professor and then working as an associate dean and co-director of the University of Florida’s Center for Cognitive Aging and Memory, he has been able to make exciting developments within the field of cognitive neuroscience, particularly in regard to treatments for cognitive decline. In 2019, Woods and his associates published Woods’ most cited work, “A technical guide to Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation, and related non-invasive brain stimulation tools,” which simplifies and explains various techniques for the use of transcranial direct current stimulation, or tDCS.

“In the early period of that technology [tDCS], there were a lot of sloppy applications of it,” Woods said. “This guide represents me and a lot of other investigators getting together to say that we can do better, and this field can have impact if we

do this rigorously.”

Woods said he spent his first year as associate dean of research meeting with over 200 faculty within the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

“My first step was to get to know all the people in the college that I didn’t already know,” Woods said. “It was a nonstop series of meetings, and it was the most important time in entering my role because I learned the specific needs of those I would be serving as associate dean.”

Woods said he plans on meeting with all the faculty and staff within BBS because he prefers to implement a servant-leader model in his roles; he sees his role not as that of someone who dictates but as someone who serves his community. BBS has over 3,000 students pursuing either undergraduate or graduate degrees, and Woods said he hopes to meet with as many of these students as possible.

“I am going to start my time at UTD by listening and learning,” Woods said. “We are in leadership positions to serve the people around us, we are not here to serve ourselves. To do that effectively, you need to meet, know and be side by side with the people you serve.”

AUGUST  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

August, recounted in separate interviews with *The Mercury* that August routinely stressed his appreciation of them. August also made this sentiment apparent in his work ethic, always showing up when his colleagues asked something of him.

“I’d send a message at 10 p.m. and he’d respond saying ‘I’m on it!’ and I’m like, ‘No, go to bed,’” Pearson said. “He was always there.”

August was not just a pillar within the workplace, but for the community at UTD. Lewis-Moore, who worked closely with August prior to her promotion as director of student development, reminisced on their over 15-year-long sibling-like friendship, consisting of meals shared in her home, as they lived within close range of each other and shared encouragement of each other’s work — especially as Lewis-Moore worked to receive her position as director.

August’s dedication to promoting

welcomeness on campus also shone during his time as a UTD student. Dillion Mius, a UTD alumnus, met August while they were both brothers at the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, and felt honored to speak at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, as August was a pivotal person in Mius’ life.

“He always told me to never pour from an empty cup,” Mius said. “He always told me, as much as you want the world to be better, you have to make sure that you are OK first.”

PIA  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

while also refusing to apply a fee waiver, which under Texas law can be requested when information is for the benefit of the public. The Office of Legal Affairs said it will take approximately 450 hours to

collect the information *The Mercury* requested. On July 15, *The Mercury* began a fundraiser campaign to cover the costs of the public records request.

“The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the

people to know and what is not good for them to know,” reads Texas government code § 552.001(a). “The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created.”

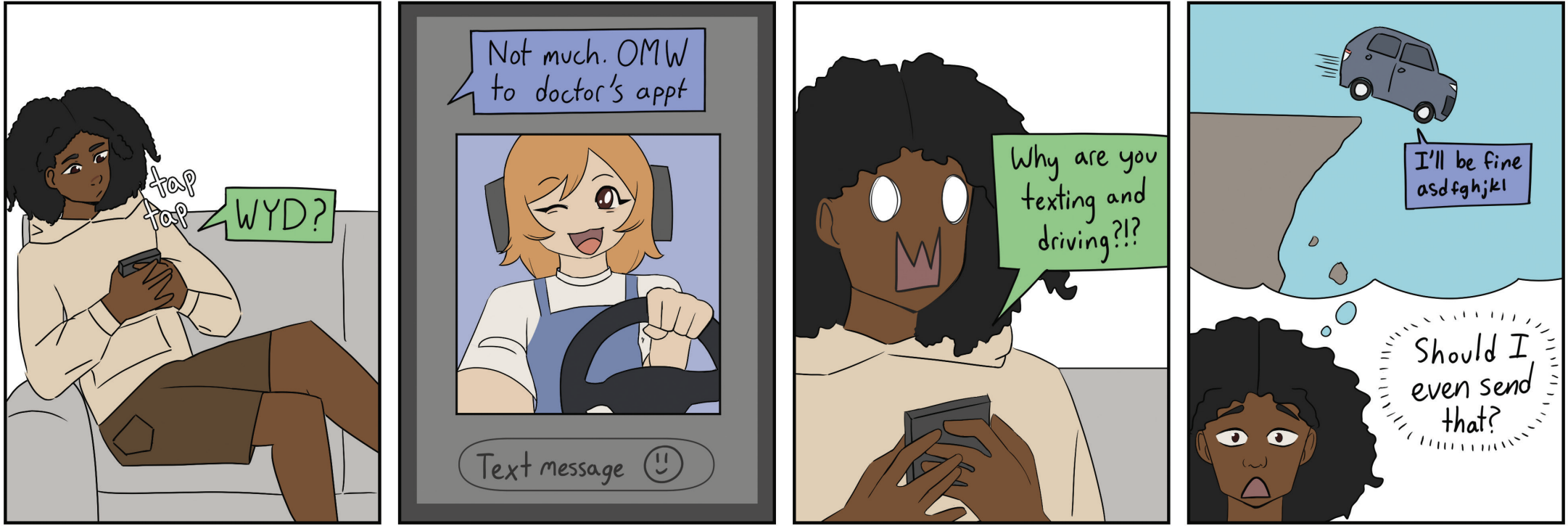


ANIKA SULTANA | MERCURY STAFF

TOP: Friends, family and colleagues pose at the Bruce August Jr. Reflection Space. BOTTOM: Yvette Pearson, Rafael Martin and Tineil Lewis-Moore inaugurate the reflection space alongside family members of August.



ON MY WAY



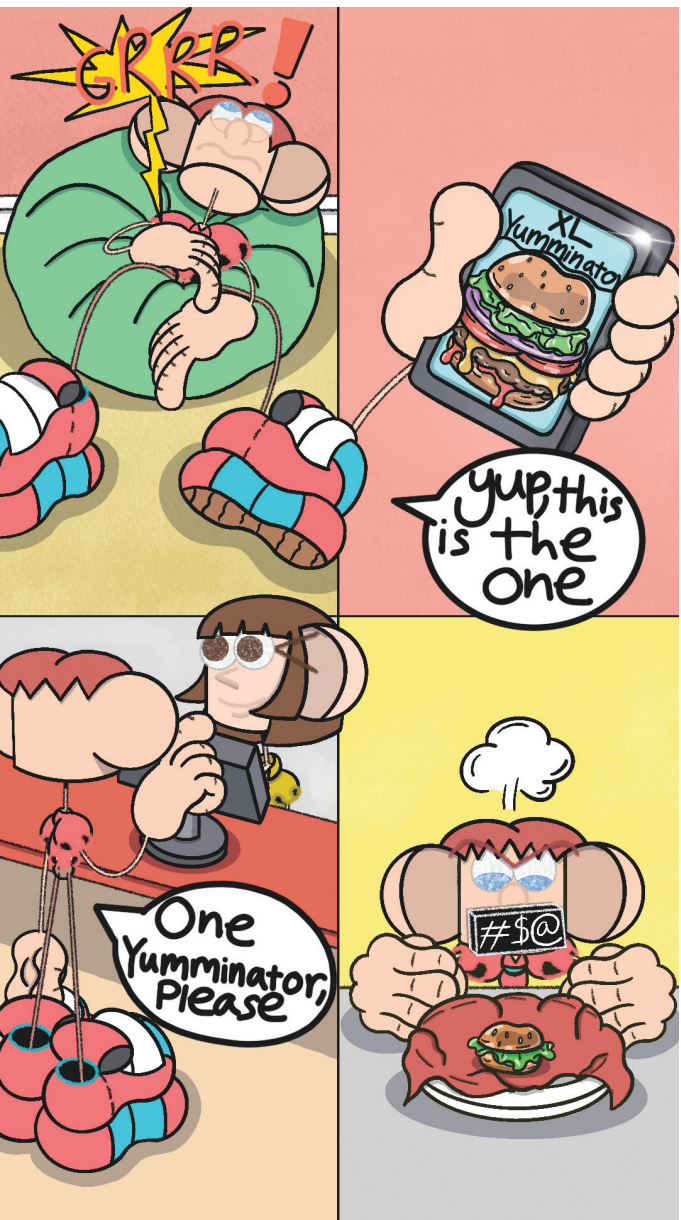
RACHEL WOON | MERCURY STAFF

OTHERWORLDLY DESTINATION



BERYL ZHU | MERCURY STAFF

FOOD BAIT



JOSHUA DAVIDSON | MERCURY STAFF

NIGHTCORE



MADABUCHI OKORO | MERCURY STAFF

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ALANA PLATT | MERCURY STAFF

Across

- 1 Round-trippers, in sports lingo  
7 A Sierra or Canyon, for example  
15 Canine's coat  
16 Freed hostage  
17 Gorgon slain by Perseus  
18 It's a first  
19 GIF alternative  
21 By the seashore  
22 "This is your last dance!"  
27 Roof overhang  
28 Sword sharpener  
29 Vape "health" claim  
31 Crossed (out)  
32 "Well, duh"  
34 Sacred ceremonies  
36 Pitch often followed by a grand slam?  
41 Cobbler, at times  
42 Outfit  
43 "The Mandalorian" actress Ming-Na \_\_\_\_  
46 Summarize  
48 Spicy Indian soup  
49 "Regrettably..."  
51 Pyramid scheme?  
53 James Bond's "shaken, not stirred" drink  
55 Pen or lighter brand  
56 Fir coat feature?  
58 No more than  
63 Wrinkled, perhaps  
64 Rubella spot  
65 Grinch's trait  
66 Driver's license, e.g.

Down

- 1 Clothes line?  
2 Undivided  
3 Angry  
4 Liberty Mutual animal mascot species  
5 Biohazard protection device  
6 Word on the street?  
7 Org.  
8 Young gallant in "Romeo and Juliet"  
9 She ruled Egypt from 51 to 30 BCE  
10 Vivaldi motif  
11 Salary increase  
12 Out-of-state purchase fee  
13 Skin care brand  
14 Toppled (over)  
20 Ingredient of 53-across  
22 Impact sound  
23 A tasty treat made by Hostess  
24 Greek war goddess  
25 Taunts  
26 Sisterly  
30 Limited  
33 Stroke of luck?  
35 The Devil  
37 Turns down  
38 "Mona \_\_\_\_"  
39 Part of Q.E.D.  
40 Highway hauler  
43 Old Native American currency beads  
44 "Seinfeld" woman  
45 Aslan's land  
47 Place for a pint  
50 Uncompromising  
52 Florida's second-largest city  
54 Pic to click  
57 Impotence and anorexia, e.g. \_\_\_\_ and cheese  
60 Spanish she-bear  
61 Camera type, briefly  
62 Danson of "Cheers"



# 73 QUESTIONS with your SG executives

Learn about your elected representatives' pet peeves, zombie apocalypse survival skills and favorite weird food combinations

**PAOLA MARTINEZ**  
Life & Arts Editor

As the newly elected 2024-2025 executive officers of Student Government, President and philosophy-computer science double major senior Devin Schwartz and Vice President and sociology senior Debopreeta Bhattacharya sat down with *The Mercury* to shed light on who they are outside of their lofty titles, in the interview style of Vogue's "73 Questions."

**Q: How long do you think you'd survive in a zombie apocalypse?**

**Schwartz:** Depends. I give it like a week. I think I could survive longer, but I would choose not to.

**Bhattacharya:** If I'm in a place where weapons are accessible, two months. I believe that the indomitable human spirit applies to me, and I feel like I can really mess up some zombies if I really needed to.

**Q: If life were a video game, what cheat code would you use the most?**

**Schwartz:** Infinite lives. I just want to have as many experiences I can.

**Bhattacharya:** "One-Hit Kill" cheat code from Mortal Kombat because it would be good in self-defense.

**Q: What is your favorite meme?**

**Schwartz:** One that I think has kind of been incorporated into my vocabulary too much is the "my brother in Christ."

**Bhattacharya:** I say "what the sigma?" a lot. Or the "umm, actually."

**Q: You have a time machine. Would you go back in time or go to the future?**

**Schwartz:** The future, maybe 100 years [from now]. [Going] back in time, there's some stuff that you can find out, but the broad strokes, we know about. The future, there's a lot more mystery. There's a lot more potential to see things that we can't even think of today.

**Bhattacharya:** I would go back in time and ensure, somehow, that the Hype House did not happen on TikTok. I don't know how we lived through that. Also, I would go back and make sure that a bunch of the men who have podcasts don't have podcasts.

**Q: If you knew you could stop a tragedy from happening, would you stop it?**

**Schwartz:** I'd probably want to change things. If everything happens for a reason, then there was a reason for me going back in time and changing it too.

**Bhattacharya:** [If] it was an event where thousands and millions of people are dying, I don't think that happens for a reason.

**Q: What is your biggest pet peeve?**

**Schwartz:** When you're walking and there's this line of people, especially in a hallway. But they're a little bit too slow and you don't want to go past them because then you have to do this whole thing.

**Bhattacharya:** When people are ignorant and they're not willing to be open minded and they're not willing to learn more about what they're ignorant of, for sure.



Devin Schwartz and Debopreeta Bhattacharya began their terms as SG executive leadership on May 1.

**Q: If you could switch lives with one person for a day, who would it be and why?**

**Schwartz:** Joe Biden because you cause so much chaos that way. I don't know how much is going on there [in his brain].

**Bhattacharya:** Anyone in the Percy Jackson show, any of the cast, I would want to switch lives with because I feel like that would be such a fun show to act on and be friends with all the other actors. I'm obsessed with Percy Jackson and I have been for many years.

**Q: Which celebrity do you NOT want to meet in real life?**

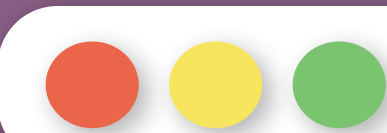
**Schwartz:** So, hear me out: Keanu Reeves. He seems so cool and everyone hypes him up so much that I can never meet him in real life because how are you going to live up to that?

**Bhattacharya:** Gal Gadot. She's just not a good actor or a good person.

**Q: Any last comments?**

**Schwartz:** (Presidential silence)

**Bhattacharya:** I may not be a woman in STEM, but I'm a woman insane.

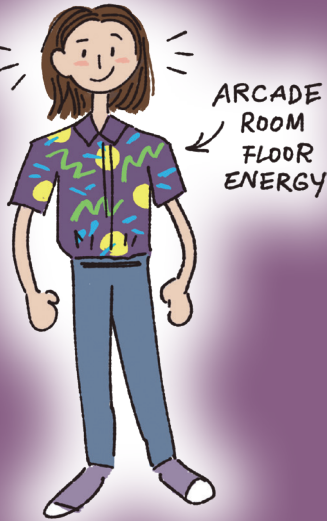


## Devin Schwartz



### FAVORITES

- song: "HOT TO GO!" by Chappell Roan
- book: "The Dispossessed"
- movie: "Good Will Hunting"
- tv show: "Modern Family"
- snack: Pretzels
- fave cuisine: Italian
- fave food: Lasagna
- weird food combo: Pop-corn and ice cream



## Debopreeta Bhattacharya

### FAVORITES

- song: "Blood Sweat & Tears" by BTS
- book: "The Mark of Athena"
- movie: "Om Shanti Om"
- tv show: "Brooklyn 99"
- snack: Chester's Hot Fries
- fave cuisine: Indian
- fave food: Chicken biryani
- weird food combo: Dry ramen with eggs and veggies





# Dhunki: a 'spellbound melody' of a cappella

A self-identified found family, performers find community through a fusion of traditional South Asian music and modern Western rhythms

**SOFIA MEINARDUS**  
Mercury Staff

UTD students travel across the country from California to Atlanta, taking stages bathed in warm lights. This a cappella group, a self-identified found family, doesn't just belt notes — they blend worlds, creating a fusion of South Asian rhythms and Western harmonies.

Dhunki A Cappella, the premier competitive South Asian fusion a cappella team at UTD, focuses on seamlessly blending Indian and Western music. Membership fluctuates, capped at 18, with 15 members this past year. Founded in 2013, the group's Hindi name means “spellbound,” with “Dhun” meaning “tune” or “melody,” reflecting Dhunki's focus on spreading South Asian music and culture.

Neuroscience junior and music director Tanav Chachad said Dhunki's unique blend fosters a sense of community and strengthens members' cultural identity, making the group more than just a musical team, given the small, close-knit group of people.

“[Dhunki] is really a family,” Chachad said. “We are super close, spending a lot of time together, especially for long practice competitions and traveling.”

Chachad said Dhunki's unique competitive edge lies in their performances. The team competes in circuits like ASA, a South-Asian a cappella circuit, with singing

and dancing performances. The repertoire induces classic and modern South Asian songs in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and other languages, mixed with Western popular music spanning across various genres, creating mashups that highlight similar tunes, rhythms or themes.

“One of the things that we do in Indian classical music is known as jetties,” Chachad said. “They are really fast-spoken syllables that are a rhythmic portion of the song, and it adds a lot of texture, a lot of high, fast-paced rhythms moving back and forth within the music.”

Dhunki competes in two major competitions each spring semester, beginning with applications and rankings in the fall. This past year, Dhunki placed second at Jeena and first at Gathe Raho. The group has previously won first place several times, including the All-American Awaaz national competition hosted by ASA in 2022. Anoushka



Dhunki performs mashups of classic South Asian songs and popular Western music.

Majumdar, a finance senior and captain of Dhunki, said the competitions unite the group.

“We all love one another at the end of the day and we all have a mutual understanding of each other,” Majumdar said. “We spend a lot of time together ... something like that brings you so much closer to the team.”

Currently, the group is recruiting new members, with auditions open to all and no prior experience required. Auditions will

be held two weeks after the beginning of fall semester and those interested can find more information on the group's Instagram @dhunkimusic. Members come from all walks of life and different majors, some with years of training in classical Indian singing and others with no prior musical experience, with the majority coming from Indian backgrounds.

Chachad said commitment and a willingness to learn are the key criteria they look for in applicants. CITS sophomore and member Ritul Nagamanickam said he joined Dhunki with no formal musical background.

“I might have done karaoke a couple of times, but I came in thinking it would just be singing around campus, doing some fun stuff as a club, so it was completely new to me,” Nagamanickam said. “I've completely fallen in love with the whole concept of a capella now.”

Chachad said that many members, being children of South Asian immigrants, find Dhunki an essential part of their cultural identity.

“Dhunki has allowed us to explore and appreciate aspects of our culture that we might not have been exposed to otherwise. Through our performances, we learn about different regional music styles and languages, deepening our connection to our roots,” Chachad said.

Majumdar said that for many members, Dhunki is a way to stay connected with their South Asian heritage and bridge the connection between family background and culture.

“It's not just about singing,” Majumdar said. “It's about embracing and showcasing our heritage.”

She said audience reactions have been very positive, with the group's efforts well-received within the South Asian community at UTD and beyond. Dhunki is commonly invited to perform at cultural events and celebrations like SMU's Diwali event, as well as weddings and birthdays where they sometimes play older and niche Indian songs such as “Mitwa” and “Darshana.”

“There's so many Indian students at UTD,” Majumdar said. “So, it's been fun to share that with them and help them embrace their culture a little bit more.”

# PHANTOMs mesmerizes with ephemeral performance

PHANTOMs' bewildering performance makes audiences question their reality through immersive audio and projected visuals

**SOFIA MEINARDUS**  
Mercury Staff

The ethereal realm of PHANTOMs, where reality and performance intertwine, leaves audiences questioning the nature of their own beliefs and perceptions. Art and performance group “Therefore” took the audience on an unforgettable journey through sound, movement and immersive visuals with a performance leaving the audience in a state of suspended curiosity and contemplation.

Arts Mission Oak Cliff, a Dallas non-profit dedicated to showcasing artistic creativity, presented Therefore's PHANTOMs, a site-specific hour-long performance, held from May 23-25 and May 30-June 1. Directed by Dean Terry, a transmedia artist and assistant professor of aesthetic studies at UTD, Therefore began as a music recording project in the 1990s, transitioning to a performance art group in 2016. The cast included guest artist Laura Hyunjee Kim, assistant professor of visual and performing arts at UTD, who said the performance aimed to foster interactivity and spontaneity within the space and between those participating in it.

Kim's involvement in the project for PHANTOMs was highly improvisational, adapting to the space and audience reactions each night. Kim said this flexibility allowed her to contribute fresh perspectives and challenge the preestablished rules of the performance, adding new layers of performance that distinguished each iteration from previous ones.

Before the night began, cast members with unkempt hair dressed in basic black shirts and sweatpants crept up, whispering

to those waiting in line for tickets, “We've been waiting for you.” When walking into the venue, a small space adorned with yellow lights scattered across the roof and sparse rows of seats greeted the audience as they enter the repurposed venue, placing the audience within arm's reach of the performers. To the side, six sets of stained-glass windows with blue and orange hues caught the eye. Small posters decorated the back of two windows, bearing the words “This is the end of the show” and a grid with symbols like stars, the moon, facial expressions and a bone.

“People are coming together to believe in the arts.”

— Laura Kim

As the show began, the lights dimmed, and an eerie atmospheric sound elevated the tension. A figure slammed his hand down on a piano at the front left of the stage, and purple lights illuminated the entire room, accentuating the beat and heightening the pressure. The show started with soft piano and the murmuring voices of the performers, angelic yet hard to decipher, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats, weaving an auditory tapestry that felt like a character itself.

A cast member stood against a wall, talking to something unseen. Words seemed to dissolve into the air, their meanings elusive, with a larger image of

the cast member projected against the wall in front of her and on the side walls.

Then, Kim walked around the audience with a yellow circular light in each hand, shining and dancing the lights between the audience members. Whispers of fingers on skin and lingering footsteps created a sense of haunting intimacy and magic, a visually stunning and abstract part of the performance that evolved organically with the other components.

“It was very abstract and kind of spoke to the space,” Kim said. “Nobody really had to know what was going on, but it organically built upon the other performances.”

When not performing, cast members would join the audience, sit beside them, or sneak up on them. Lights frequently flickered on and off, enhancing the sense of being in a storm, and at one moment, two cast members held a fake bow and arrow and Nerf gun to each other, talking and adding an element of playful tension.

PHANTOMs by Therefore was an experience that defied traditional categorization, blending elements of performance art, experimental music and conceptual art. It held the audience's attention from start to finish. Though confusing at times, the performance succeeded in creating a space where reality and performance merged, effectively inviting the audience to explore and question their realities.

“People are coming together to believe in the arts,” Kim said. “This spiritual gathering to consider aesthetic experiences outside of our collective. For me, it was more about the community and what the arts can do to propel this spiritual feeling.”



PHOTOS BY DEAN TERRY | COURTESY

**Left: PHANTOMs, a site-specific hour-long performance with visual projections and carefully-curated lighting effects, took place at Arts Mission Oak Cliff, a Dallas non-profit dedicated to showcasing local artistic creativity. Top right: A performer stands amid the venue's projected visuals. Bottom right: Laura Kim performs in the show, with her involvement in PHANTOMs being highly improvisational.**



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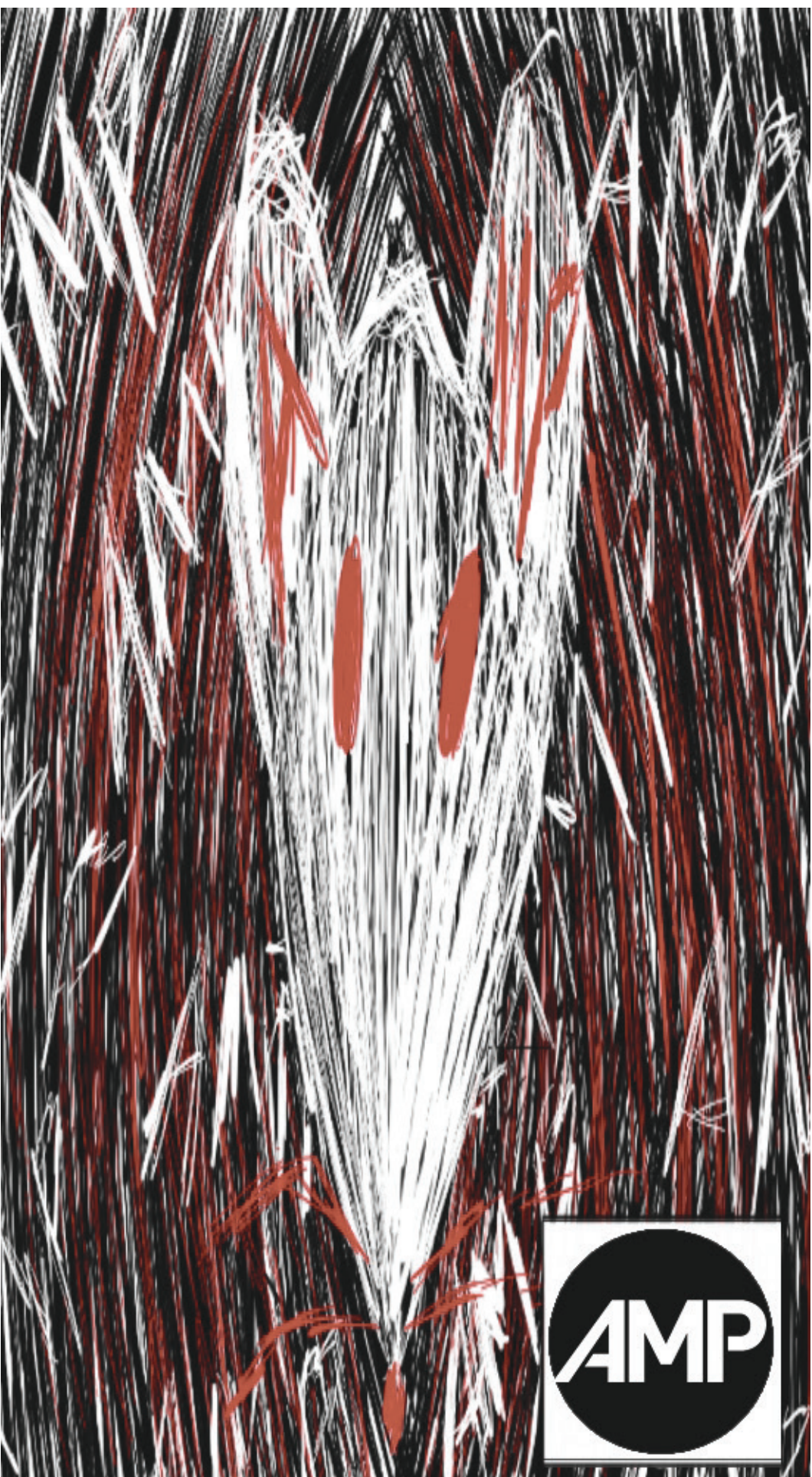





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# Editor's Desk: critical journalism

The considerations of student journalists in their approach to publishing wide-reaching coverage



ERIN GUTSCHKE | MERCURY STAFF

In its 44 years of publication, *The Mercury* has typically focused on hyper-local journalism: things which affect the UTD community and local DFW area instead of state or national-level coverage. In the wake of student protests and the events of May 1, however, the scope of our coverage has had to expand to include global geopolitical conflicts and the words we use to discuss them.

In the past two years, hundreds of students have worked to pass Student Government resolutions and organize walkouts, sit-ins and protests on a scale never before seen at UTD. The large wave of campus activism ties back directly to Israel's actions in the occupied territory of Palestine. Students at UTD have specifically called for the university to divest from its investments in five specific companies: Raytheon Technologies, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics. The 2023 Permanent University fund audit, managed by UTIMCO, stated that the UT System and A&M System had approximately \$3.5 million invested in the five aforementioned companies, which amounts to 0.005% of the total \$69.2 billion in UTIMCO investments. For instance, UTD student activists have specifically protested their school's investment in U.S. weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin during a time in which the U.S. provided 69% of total arms imports to Israel, calling on UTD to divest. It is imperative that *The Mercury* use the most accurate and representative terminology possible when discussing the political background of campus events.

Words are the main medium through which *The Mercury* communicates news, and thus it is imperative that our choice of words reflect the up-to-date information available. A change in terminology, even if minor, can have wide-reaching ramifications for an article and the paper as a whole. Terminology determines how agency is diffused, the immediate biases a reader will face and what is being treated as the baseline of discourse. Each media

“It is [The Mercury's] duty to provide information that is in accordance with the truth.”

— Gregorio Olivares

Words are the main medium through which *The Mercury* communicates news, and thus it is imperative that our choice of words reflect the up-to-date information available. A change in terminology, even if minor, can have wide-reaching ramifications for an article and the paper as a whole. Terminology determines how agency is diffused, the immediate biases a reader will face and what is being treated as the baseline of discourse. Each media publication, no matter how neutrally it presents itself, has its own baseline, influenced by a variety of factors such as geopolitical, ideological and monetary interests. Like countless other news outlets, *The Mercury* typically follows the Associated Press' guidelines for everything from Oxford comma usage to identity labels to whether something should be phrased as a “war” or a “conflict,” and while the language approved by AP has evolved in recent years to be more inclusive, the lingering specter of Eurocentrism remains, particularly around the foreign interests of the U.S. It is up to *The Mercury* to decide whether to accept AP's guidance for political situations that have been historically improperly handled by U.S. journalism – such as American journalists helping normalize U.S. imperialism since the 19th century — or pioneer our own in-house rules.

In our May 20 editorial, *The Mercury*

decided that to provide the most accurate information when describing Israel's actions in Palestine, AP's guidance was inadequate. The decision to use language such as “apartheid,” “genocide” and “occupation” was not made lightly and was influenced by a broad range of sources and experts at the time of creation and in the weeks since publication.

Holocaust survivor and Human Rights Watch co-founder Aryeh Neier wrote in the June 6, issue of the New York Review that in his six decades participating in the human rights movement internationally, he has rarely used the term “genocide” because of its severity. Neier also did not initially support the argument put forth by South Africa that Israel's actions constituted genocide; however, Neier writes that his opinion changed because of Israel's “sustained policy of

obstructing the movement of humanitarian assistance into the territory,” a policy, Neier says, that has cumulatively led to the starvation of Palestinians amid the continued bombing campaign in Gaza.

As part of the International Court of Justice ruling that posited Israel was plausibly committing genocide, the ICJ instituted provisional measures which required Israel to prevent operations which would harm civilians while allowing for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. On May 11, twelve Israeli human rights groups

signed a letter, which urged Israel to comply with the ruling, since humanitarian aid had dropped by 50% since its issuance from the ICJ, according to the signatories.

On June 19, the U.N. Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory found that Israel was responsible for various war crimes including but not limited to “extermination, intentionally directing attacks against civilians, murder or willful killing, using starvation as a method of war, forcible transfer ... and cruel or inhuman treatment.” These crimes and continued “extermination” campaign carried out against the Palestinian people alongside the dehumanizing rhetoric used by members of Israel's government and war cabinet meet the criteria outlined by the U.N. Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.

*The Mercury* is committed to representing the entire student body, and to this extent it is our duty to provide information that is in accordance with the truth. Our journalism must be critical and it must be factual. Students are always welcome to send letters to the editor to *The Mercury* if they wish to share their thoughts about our articles and policy. If you have any questions, please reach out to editor@utdmercury.com.

Signed,

Gregorio Olivares Gutierrez  
Editor-in-Chief

## Letter to the Editor: State-sanctioned violence, a chilling message courtesy of UTD

FATIMAH AZEEM  
Courtesy

To the current Editorial Board and readers of *The Mercury*,

One thing is clear to me after reading *The Mercury's* recent coverage of the Gaza Solidarity encampment: administrators' horrifying response May 1 was undoubtedly a show of power.

The university tries to justify sending in the state troopers with assault rifles and riot gear as a mere execution of policy — a rational response to unlawfulness. But don't let this fool you:

there is nothing “rational” about state-sanctioned violence. There is nothing justified in the supposed “protectors” of our free expression employing fear tactics — in approving the militarized aggressors that detained peaceful unarmed demonstrators. May 1 was a threat above all else: UTD will retaliate when its status quo is challenged.

Student protesters asked: “*Why are you in riot gear?*”

The answer? To warn all those watching: *We will use force again to put you in your place.*

It is unacceptable, it is chilling and I reject administrators' brutal repression against our students.

The lengths UTD will go to squash assembly and even deny tuition-paying demonstrators conferment disturb me to the core. The Dean of Students called the former SJP president a “disgrace” before denying him his degree — but it is our administrators who are truly disgraceful. While administration readily deploys war-ready police to subdue Comets, they ignore the core issues driving demonstrations, and instead, continue to support UTIMCO's investments in companies that fund militarism, neo-imperialism and genocide.

This university that suppresses its students' voices has no future without the resignation of all administrators involved with the May 1 response.

Sincerely,  
Fatimah Azeem  
Former Editor-in-Chief of *The Mercury*, summer '23 to spring '24



FATIMAH AZEEM

## ‘Inside Out 2’ delves into your deepest anxieties through film

HYUN LIM  
Mercury Staff  
KAVYA RACHEETI  
Opinion Editor

Struggling with confidence and the crushing feeling of “I’m not good enough” is an all-too-common adolescent experience, perfectly portrayed and overcome in Pixar’s “Inside Out 2.”

The original “Inside Out,” released in 2015, was one of the most loved animated films of the decade for its beautiful animation and complex story. With an audience rating of 91% from Rotten Tomatoes, it became a contemporary classic, winning several accolades, like the Best Animated Film Award in 2015 by the National Board of Review. Pixar, known for fun movies portraying children's lives and imaginations, released the sequel June 14, depicting a middle school Riley with new, complicated emotions. “Inside Out 2” features new, relatable emotions showing vulnerability through the character of Anxiety and providing an overall inspiring message about growth.

“Inside Out” depicted characters that controlled the inner mind of 11-year-old protagonist Riley as the personifications of emotions: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Fear. In “Inside Out 2,” three new emotions were introduced as Riley begins adolescence: Envy, voiced by Ayo Edebiri; Embarrassment, voiced by Paul Walter Hauser; Ennui, which translates to boredom, voiced by Adèle Exarchopoulos; and Anxiety, voiced by Maya Hawke. Anxiety takes charge of Riley's mind, suppressing her core emotions and replacing Joy entirely. Riley experiences the effects of Anxiety: overthinking about whether she's likable, and as a result losing old friends as she starts hanging around the seemingly cooler hockey team at her future high school.

The movie started out with a seamless introduction, transitioning from “Inside Out” to its sequel. Riley, voiced by Kensington Tallman, and her friends find out they aren't going to the same high school, which rattles her. The captain of the high school's hockey team, Val Ortiz, voiced by Lilimar Hernandez, invites Riley to hang out with her, leading Riley to abandon her original group of friends during summer hockey camp. Anxiety takes over Riley as she does

anything to get closer to Val, which causes her to grow more competitive and distant.

Riley's sense of self changes for the worse as Anxiety's control persists, going from “I am a good person” to “I am not good enough.” Anxiety's plan to improve Riley's image officially backfires when Riley gets a panic attack during one of the final games that determines if Riley will make the hockey team. Anxiety freezes when Riley has a panic attack, allowing Joy to resume control once more. Joy creates a new sense of self embracing all the parts of Riley — her most embarrassing memories, her happy memories, her sad memories, her anxious memories, etc. As Riley's new sense of self arises, she overcomes her panic attack, makes amends with her friends and begins to understand her new self. Riley's emotions come to understand that all her feelings are valid and make her a complete person. “Inside Out 2” succeeds at being relatable and comforting through its honest depiction of the discomfort of adolescence — where emotions become more convoluted as people get older.

This notion is best seen in Riley's overthinking process, especially when she strives to join the high school hockey team at all costs. Anxiety's characterization in this film greatly embodies the inner turmoil and personifies the change that happens to Riley during such a critical life stage, especially in the versatility of Anxiety's actions, such as Riley getting anxious over little things like how she is acting or talking, as well as the extent of the pressure people put on themselves to achieve their goals. Viewers can easily relate to their own experiences of anxiousness, which is the driving force of the film's comforting and validating tone.

Pixar continues to accurately portray what it is like to grow up with this second installment of the “Inside Out” series, especially the heightened emotions of adolescence. According to SF-GATE, the producers were helped by nine teens from all over the country who helped make sure that the movie didn't have moments that could've been deemed as “too cringe.” In a scene of the film Riley and her friends were scolded by the coach, which embarrasses her. The sec-



PIXAR | COURTESY

ondhand embarrassment seeps out of this scene and into the audience itself by emphasizing the familiarity of an embarrassing moment without

breaking viewers' immersion. “Inside Out 2” beautifully touches on new emotional experiences, such as suppressing your

emotions and insecurity. The movie highlights the complexity of growing up, and what it means to have a sense of self as you grow older.



# University administration, police target Palestinian UTD alum

The former SJP president was arrested a month after graduation. Administration has used violence, academic investigations and arrests against students.

**UTD STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE**  
Courtesy

On June 26 at 2 p.m., a state trooper in Denton County targeted and arrested recent UTD graduate and former president of Students for Justice in Palestine, Mousa Najjar. UTDPD authorized his arrest with the backing of Dean of Students Amanda Smith and university administration for protesting the ongoing occupation of Palestine and genocide in Gaza. A few weeks prior to his graduation, Najjar was arrested alongside 20 other students, professors and community members when UTD called state troopers and multiple police departments to brutalize and remove participants of the Gaza Liberation Plaza. The details that emerged regarding his second arrest revealed the lengths UTD took to suppress its students' voices, despite the university's silence on the increase in Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian hate crimes all over Texas, including at UTD. This is the reality that the UTD and DFW communities must face to keep each other safe from profit-driven institutions and their targeted attacks.

On May 15, Najjar walked the stage at his graduation and held up a Palestine flag with the statement "DIVEST FROM DEATH" in protest of UTD's complacency and profiteering off genocide in Gaza. Members of the administration and university police immediately threatened that he would be arrested if he did not leave campus grounds and escorted him out. Officers claimed that Najjar was in violation of his bond conditions, which stipulate that he cannot be on campus except for "class and class-related activities." Najjar's attorney spoke with UTD officers and affirmed that he had the right to be at his graduation and that it fell within his bond conditions.

Najjar's attorney said it was within his legal right to be on campus that day, and despite Najjar complying fully with police demands, UTDPD still issued two warrants for his arrest a few days after his graduation.

The first was for "Criminal Trespass," and the second was for "Disrupting a Meeting or Procession."

This arrest is a clear example of the glaring hypocrisy of UTDPD and administration. During graduation season, hundreds of UTD students, as well as members of the UTD 21, walked the stage holding flags; none were targeted and asked to leave, and they were allowed to participate in their respective graduations. University administration decided to make an example out of the president of SJP and targeted him as a Palestinian student who participated in the Gaza Liberation encampment — this is a clear act of discrimination.

Through this arrest, we see that UTD persists in suppressing student efforts for Palestine and for divestment from war profiteers. After several resolutions, protests, demonstrations and an encampment at UTD, the university has reaffirmed its commitment to valuing profits over human life and its students and investing in weapons manufacturers such as General Dynamics, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Boeing. Since early October, Israel — using weapons from these companies — has murdered over 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza in a clear act of genocide. Students at UTD, including Najjar, were fierce advocates against this deadly relationship that their university holds with weapons manufacturers. Despite this repression, we have repeatedly emphasized our demands: UTD must divest from these corporations. They cannot silence all of us; the UTD community must commit to the growing movement for divestment, and unite its voice for Palestine.

Najjar was released shortly after 8:30 p.m. on the \$1,000 bail amount the judge had issued alongside his warrants. His community members are committed to fighting these false charges and holding UTD accountable for its bigotry and discriminatory treatment of Najjar and the rest of the student body that stands with Palestine.



ANIKA SULTANA | GRAPHICS EDITOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Mercury* greatly values its readers' input and welcomes criticism. Letters should be 250 words or less and focused on a concern about the publication or a current issue. Students should include their full name, major and year. Faculty, staff and administrators should include their full name and title. Email letters to [editor@utdmercury.com](mailto:editor@utdmercury.com). Please include a clear headshot. Authors may only have one letter printed per edition of *The Mercury*.



## Letter to the Editor: Transphobia creates environment of hate on campus

Campus administration failed to take action against transphobia on campus

RIVER BLUHM  
Courtesy

*Originally published on our website on April 24, 2023. This LTTE never ran in print, and the author resubmitted it asking for print republication.*

The recent wave of anti-trans hatred being pushed in the media and legislation has, unfortunately, spilled over onto campus. In recent weeks, students have spotted a number of flyers asking about "transition regret," which studies show is extremely rare, according to a meta-analysis by Bustos et. al. The purpose of these flyers is clear—they are looking for vulnerable students to turn into political pawns to attack the trans community and spread disinformation about transitioning. While absolutely horrific, this comes as no surprise given recent narratives



RIVER BLUHM

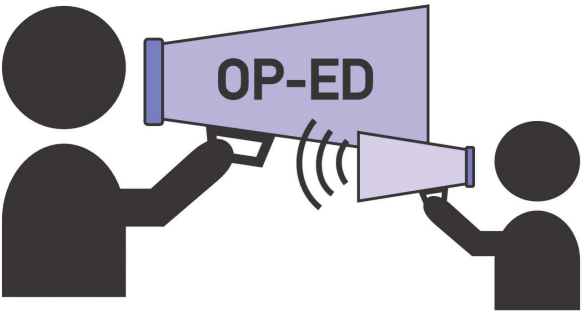
in far-right media, arguing that being trans is a "social contagion" and depicting us as "groomers" for simply existing.

In fact, these narratives have been spread by certain student organizations, such as TPUSA at UTD, which allowed a disruption of a drag event last semester to be organized in its official GroupMe channels. Unfortunately, no official action has been taken against either the student who disrupted the event or the TPUSA members who encouraged him, which has only served to further embolden transphobia on campus.

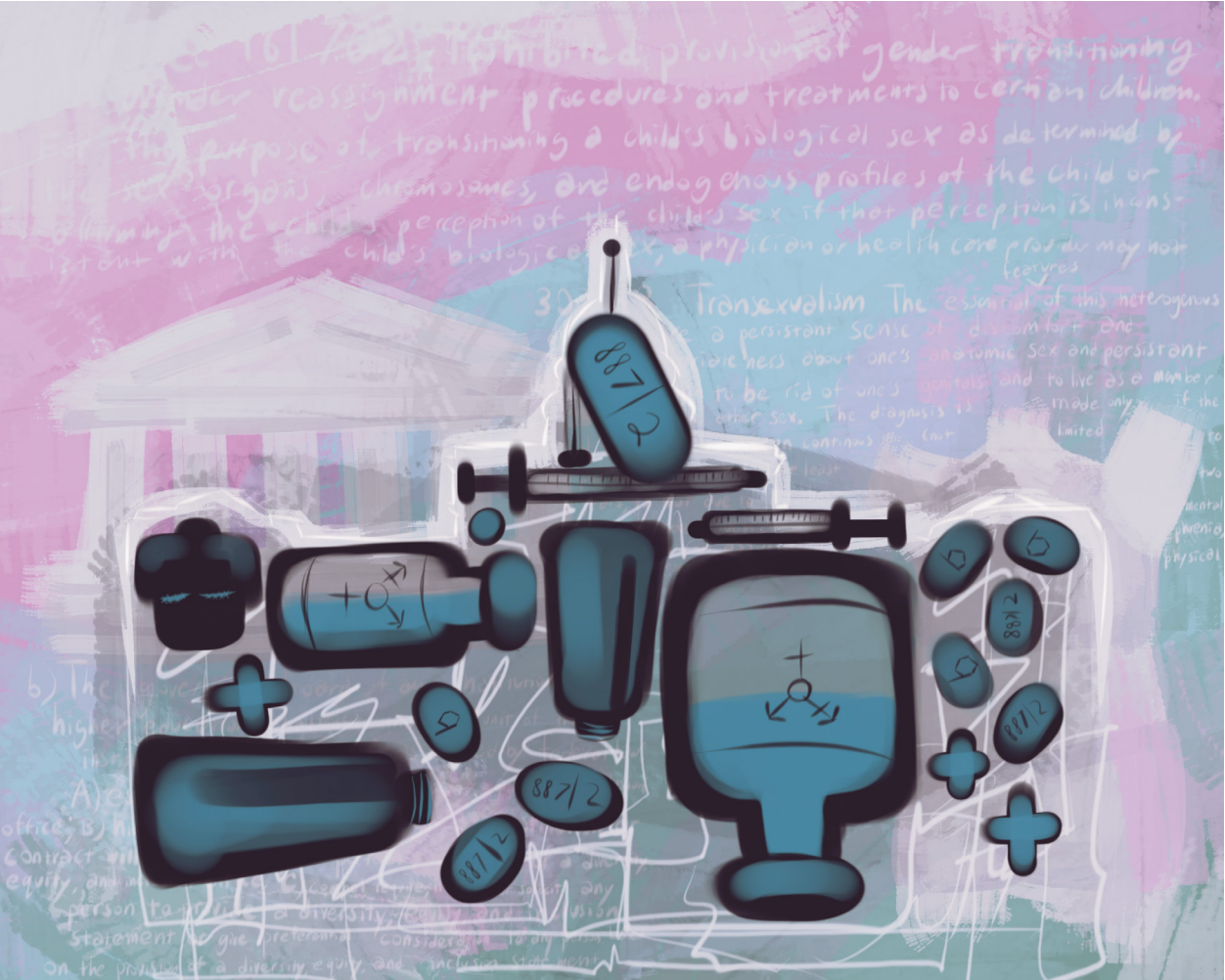
UTD has a reputation as one of the most accepting campuses for LG-BTQ+ students in Texas. Unfortunately, this vocal minority continues

to spread senseless, irrational hatred, and will continue to do so as long as their behavior is emboldened by the inaction of university administration. The trans community is under threat, and our support system is under threat from anti-DEI legislation. At this crucial time, the university must stand up and stand behind our trans community with action, not just empty words.

OP-EDS



*The Mercury* publishes op-ed submissions in an effort to reflect a wide variety of campus perspectives. Topics or the opinion reflected in the op-ed should be relevant to a college or local audience. Apart from your name and photo, personal info will not be published. *The Mercury* reserves the right to reject any submission and to edit op-eds for clarity, brevity, accuracy and to prevent libel. Email op-eds to [opinioneditor@utdmercury.com](mailto:opinioneditor@utdmercury.com).



RAINIER PEDERSON | MERCURY STAFF



UTD administration is paywalling records critical for investigation into the May 1 encampment, arrests and aftermath — here's how you can help.

We requested communications, memos and schedules from UTD President Richard Benson, UTD Vice President and Chief of Staff Rafael Martín, UTDPD Chief of Police Brent Tourangeau and Dean of Students Amanda Smith — all of whom were involved with the May 1 events — that discussed topics like “protest,” “Collin County Jail,” “Texas DPS,” “criminal trespass” and “Greg Abbott,” among other key-



The cost of collecting and providing *The Mercury* with records dated between April 22 and May 20 that are relevant to our request is more expensive than sending records dated between April 29 and May 3. The wider date range should reveal more information about how administration responded to the preceding week of protests and how UTD is proceeding with litigation and policy in the arrests' aftermath. Sending *The Mercury* electronic copies of all relevant records costs more than allowing document inspection, where our Editor-in-Chief will visit the legal office to read the materials. Having access to physical copies allows *The Mercury* to publish them for our readers to have physical proof of their existence and contents, while with inspection, our readership must trust what we report with the documents instead of seeing the documents

While it is possible to appeal to the attorney general of being unfairly charged for a PIA request, the current Attorney General Ken Paxton and the broader Texas court system have historically been hostile to students and journalists and likely to side with Office of Legal Affairs' fees; every journalist and lawyer *The Mercury* spoke with cautioned against appealing. Therefore, *The Mercury* is proceeding with a fundraiser to gather enough money to purchase these documents. This fundraiser will run until September 30 or until sufficient funds have been gathered to cover the cost of the re-

Donate to our fundraiser by visiting [tinyurl.com/mercurygfm](https://tinyurl.com/mercurygfm) or by scanning the QR code below. Every little bit helps. *The Mercury* thanks you for your commitment and support to investigating the most significant campus event in recent memory.



  
KAVYA RACHEETI  
OPINION EDITOR

On a brisk Thursday afternoon...

**To Do:**

- ☒ Ignore Students
- ☒ Crush Spirit
- ☒ Rocks into
- ☒ Campus
- ☒ Bust
- ☒ Weapons
- ☒ Manufacturing

**Inbox**

egabbott@texas.gov  
D ALERT: ACTIVISTS 12:01 PM  
Attention subordinates: These liberals are  
testing our streets, drinking our water,  
and taking away our slurs! I need your h...

ncernedprof@utdallas.edu  
I still employed?? 10:00AM  
Nosneb please, I have a wife and kids  
need to know if I must seek employment  
ewhere.

repy@raytheon.org  
MORE MONEY NOW!! 9:56 AM  
e need you Richard! Help us RESIST the  
ike mind virus by INVESTING in HIGH  
ECISION COLONIALISM MACHINES...

administrationreminder@utdalla...  
REMINDER: Arrest that Palisti... 9:27 AM  
Re: Your in-person request.  
A month and a half has passed since  
graduation, which should be enough time  
for those meddling kids to forget why th...

editor@utdmercury.com  
Interview Request (37) 9:23 AM  
This is our 37th attempt to contact you...

CarlanHrow49@billionaire.com  
Vintage WWII Collector's lte... 8:47 AM  
Hey Dicky! Newest Nazi memorabilia  
came in 2day. Want pics? call me xoxo...

DailyAffirmations@villainemoti

**OFFICE OF THE PRESDEMENT**

April 30, 2024

Dear Collin County Sheriff's Department, Allen PD,  
Richardson PD, UTDPD and Texas DPS,

As you well know, UTD is home to rabble-rousers,  
miscreants, dissidents, and all-in-all dangerous protesters.  
While I have allowed these students to run amok exercising  
their so-called "free speech" for some time now, I am  
reaching my utmost limit.

Should an "encampment" like UT Austin's situation occur at  
UTD, send me 60 of your finest, strong-jawed, oiled-up men  
posthaste. You are welcome to bring all your cool and  
foreboding riot equipment so local Texans can see their tax  
dollars are being spent well, even though it will look like a  
gross escalation of violence. I have already made a policy  
that nobody knows about so arrestees can be charged for  
criminal trespass.

I know this email is public information, but don't worry — my  
bestie Ken Paxton and I are handling it. Nobody will be able  
to cough up enough money to access it, so no one will know  
what we did. |

Best Whooshes,  
Dr. Richard B. Nosreb

GRACE COWGER | MERCURY STAFF